

... my letter to you at 6/7/10.

As for the Facebook idea, I can't give a definite answer because I know so little about Facebook. But my initial reaction is strongly negative, because the little that I do know suggests that Facebook is a mainly a place where adolescents (of any age) post narcissistic self-advertisements in an attempt to make friends via the Internet.

Let's remember that what is important is not Ted Kaczynski. The thing that really matters is what the technoindustrial system is doing to the world. That is the subject —————→



Trouble TO CONTACT my lawyer.

⑦ I have a question. Someone sent me a thing from amazon.com that lists booksellers that sell Tech Slavery. This is at

[http://www.amazon.com/gp/offer-listing/1932595805/  
ref=sr\\_1\\_1\\_ol...](http://www.amazon.com/gp/offer-listing/1932595805/ref=sr_1_1_ol...) (6/17/2010)

An example of a listing is:

Seller: any\_book

Rating: ★★★★★ (521948 ratings) 93% positive  
over the past 12 months.

My question is, what do these numbers mean?



LEW KALZINSKI

October 25, 2010

to  
DR. MAUREEN KENDRICK MURPHY

[Corrected First draft, SAVE.  
There is no carbon copy.]

Dear Dr. Murphy:

Thanks for your letter of October 13, which I received on October 20. I'll try to answer your questions

You ask whether I know of any other colleges or universities that use ISAIF as a text for a course or as a platform for critical thinking. I've occasionally received information (not necessarily reliable) to the effect that ISAIF was being used in a course at some college or university, but I have definite knowledge of only one institution that has used ISAIF in the recent past: Dr. David Skrbina teaches a course in the philosophy of technology at the Dearborn campus of the University of Michigan, and he has used ISAIF in his course. I assume he will use it again the next time he teaches the course. Dr. Skrbina, by the way, wrote an introduction for Technological Slavery.

At the end of your letter you mention an article in The Atlantic by Walter Isaacson, and you ask, "Who will decide what [information] is important and useful, and how would one assign a price to it?" I'm not sure whether this question is addressed to me or whether you only meant to indicate the question that Isaacson considered in his article. In any case I don't have much to say in response to this question, because I know very little about the enterprises involved in the dissemination of information. I'll only hazard a guess that the price of information will be determined by what are called "market forces".

Now the big question. You ask: "Do you think the power of an individual's personal comments and beliefs posted on the Internet can supersede that of large organizations so that an individual might one



day theoretically have more influence than do large organizations?"

Here again I'm handicapped by my lack of knowledge of the Internet. I have never had direct access to the Internet; I know only what I read in the print media and what people on the outside write to me, or what I can infer from Internet articles that they send me. So my answer to your question will be based mainly on general notions about the effects of the dissemination of ideas, rather than on any specific knowledge of the Internet.

You write: "We have noticed that seemingly insignificant individuals are able to garner huge audiences (on the Internet and/or You Tube<sup>[\*]</sup>) for expressing their views, singing, or entertaining others. These ideas often go 'viral' in a matter of minutes, but they are seldom intellectual ideas."

It sounds as if the phenomena you refer to are what sociologists call "fads" or "crazes". Fads and crazes are briefly discussed in the Encyclopaedia Britannica article "Collective Behavior" (15th ed., 2003, Vol. 16, pages 558-59), and are discussed at much greater length by Neil J. Smelser, Theory of Collective Behavior, Macmillan, New York, 1971. Fads and crazes are usually harmless and ephemeral phenomena that serve only to entertain the people who participate in them. Fads and crazes can occasionally have dangerous consequences (e.g., the antisemitic outburst mentioned in the Britannica article), but with its powers of propaganda and of physical coercion the technoindustrial system seems to be consistently able to prevent these occurrences from getting out of hand. Moreover, even if a fad or a craze did totally escape the system's restraints

\*

I have no idea what You Tube is.



and have serious, lasting consequences, it would probably be something like a random phenomenon, not something its initiator could predict or control.

Financial crazes are a possible exception. I don't know enough about economics to venture an opinion as to whether major, long-lasting economic phenomena such as the Great Depression of the 1930s or the current recession could be described as results of financial crazes, but a financial craze can certainly cause many people to lose a great deal of money (e.g., the South Sea Bubble; see the Britannica article), and I can well imagine that a skilled financial manipulator might be able to use the Internet to start a craze in order to profit from it.

Apart from the foregoing, I find it hard to imagine that a single individual, or a small group of individuals, solely by posting ideas on the Internet, could exert a purposeful influence outweighing that of large organizations; and I mean an influence not merely on superficial phenomena such as fads and fashions, but influence on the decision of important questions that affect millions of people; for example, whether to continue offshore drilling for petroleum, how to reform the healthcare system, or what to do about illegal immigration.

I'll give my reasons for this opinion, and add some reservations, further on. But first I want to point out that even if a few rare individuals could exert a decisive influence via the Internet, that would not be very important in relation to the question we discussed earlier, namely, whether the Internet enhances personal freedom -- meaning personal freedom for people generally, not just for an occasional exceptional individual. Let's assume it's true that



in rare cases an individual, solely by posting his or her ideas on the Internet, can exert an influence on important issues that outweighs the influence of large organizations. Still that does nothing for the millions of other individuals who would wish to exert an influence on the same issues but cannot do so.

The nature of technoindustrial society is such that decisions have to be made that affect large numbers of people. If a decision affects a million individuals, then each individual can have, on average, only a one-millionth share in making the decision. See ISAIF, paragraph 117. Suppose for example that the question is whether, or how much, to raise property taxes in Cook County, Illinois in order to improve the school system. Since Chicago is located in Cook County the question affects several million individuals, and obviously only a minute fraction of that number can have a significant influence on the decision that will be made. Let's assume the question is to be decided by referendum. The only individuals who normally will have a significant influence over the decision will be a handful of people in positions of power, such as public officials, leaders of political parties, and officials of any corporations, labor unions, or other large organizations that may donate enough money to the political parties to be entitled to have their own views taken into account. Let's say that 5,000,000 voters will be affected by the decision and that there are just 50 individuals among them who will ordinarily have more influence over the decision than they get from possessing a single vote among 5,000,000. That leaves 4,999,950 people who individually have no perceptible influence over the decision.

Now let's assume that a single individual among those 4,999,950 could conceivably use the Internet to overcome the influence of the large organizations involved



and have the question decided according to his or her preference. That still leaves the other 4,999,949 individuals without any perceptible influence over the decision.

I have to break my letter off at this point because an urgent legal matter came up a short while ago, and I have to deal with it promptly. I'll continue the present discussion when I can, probably within the next week or so. Meanwhile, please give my regards to your critical-thinking class.

Sincerely yours,  
Ted Kaepyski



to  
DR. MAUREEN KENDRICK MURPHY

November 9, 2010  
[Corrected first draft,  
SAVE. There is no  
carbon copy.]

Dear Dr. Murphy:

I trust you've received my letters of October 25 and November 5.

Yesterday evening I reread an article by Michael Hirschorn, "Truth Lies Here", The Atlantic, November 2010, pages 58-64, and it reminded me of certain things that throw doubt on some of the opinions I expressed in my letters of October 25 and November 5. I had actually read the article, hastily, long before I wrote my letter of November 5, maybe even before I wrote that of October 25, but I hadn't digested the article properly. I've also been aware for some time of the existence of Andrew Breitbart and Julian Assange, but I hadn't made the connection between them and your question about the influence that an individual might exert via the Internet. (If you infer from this that I don't do much thinking about the Internet, you're quite right.)

Anyway, by reminding me of people like Breitbart and Assange, Hirschorn's article made me wonder whether I had gone too far in discounting the possibility of individual influence via the Internet. But I know so little about Breitbart and Assange that it's difficult for me to judge what bearing they might have on the argument about individual influence. Here are some of the questions that arise:

(a) Regarding both Breitbart and Assange: To what extent do they operate as individuals and to what extent as heads of organized groups that work with them by digging up information, etc.? (Compare what I wrote in my letter of



11/5/10: "In order to accomplish anything [individuals and small groups] have to organize for practical action, recruit a following ....")

(b) Regarding Assange: In my letter of 11/5/10, footnote 1, I pointed out: "An individual discovering information not publicly known might achieve significant results by revealing that information on the Internet. One can imagine, for instance, an oil-company employee publicizing safety violations committed in offshore drilling." Assange doesn't well fit this pattern, because he repeatedly and systematically seeks out and publicizes information that has been concealed. The timely revelation of safety violations in offshore drilling might have prevented the recent oil-spill in the Gulf of Mexico, but more often the revelation of private information merely gives rise to a public scandal that soon blows over and doesn't really change anything. Maybe some politician's career is ruined, but he's soon replaced by another politician. So one has to ask, how much influence does Assange really have? That's a question I can't even begin to answer.

(c) Regarding Breitbart:

(i) Is he really acting as an individual or as the leader of a small group, or is he essentially a mouthpiece for the politicians who head the movement that we might call "the sociopathic right"?

(ii) Even if Breitbart is acting strictly on his own individual initiative, he certainly didn't start the movement for which he speaks. He simply tells the movement what it wants to hear. It is a truism that people want their leaders to tell them what they already believe and



lead them in the direction they already want to go. So does Breitbart really make any difference? If he hadn't existed, wouldn't someone else have arisen out of the movement who would have performed much the same function as Breitbart?

Even if people like Assange and Breitbart can correctly be regarded as individuals who exert great influence via the Internet, the most important point that I made in my letter of 10/25/10 still stands: Assuming that a few individuals can use the Internet to make themselves more influential than large organizations, it remains true that the vast majority of individuals lack any perceptible influence over the major public decisions that affect their lives.

Sincerely yours,  
Ted Kaczynski